

Robert's Rant: Choosing Irving and Wiggins will be unwise

By **Robert Belardi**

OPINION

With the NBA preseason currently underway, now is the time to start researching on the players you will feel, will be the best suited options to take home the fantasy basketball crown.

Mind you, researching is no joke. You have to make a calculated approach with your picks. You have to question exactly how you're going to balance your lineup, or whether you're one of those fantasy players that often favours one position over the other.

Some teams love having more guards than forwards and some other owners might want to have more centres than guards. It's all preference.

But when looking at who you want to select, it isn't exactly a surprise when external factors come into play that leaves fantasy owners shuddered. Of course, this is all out of control but with prior research for this upcoming season, there are a few players that we all know we need to be weary of.

The first player that fantasy managers should pay the utmost attention to is none other than Kyrie Irving. Known for taking breaks throughout the year or seen maskless at his sister's birthday party last year, Irving is prone to things outside basketball. But when he's on the court, he's arguably a top-ten fantasy player and I can speak for myself, he helped me secure the title in my fantasy last season.

Irving averaged 26.9 points 4.8 rebounds and 6.0 assists along with an elite 92.2 free-throw percentage. But this year we might have more to worry about for Irving again. Irving, who isn't vaccinated and hasn't shown any signs of changing his mind, will be a tough fantasy player to choose. New York State has one of the strictest rules for being vaccinated in an indoor setting. That could potentially mean, Irving will not be able to play a single home game if it currently stands.

So, despite his stellar performances on the court, Irving is a huge risk. It would be one thing if he wasn't able to play in only a couple of arenas, but with home games on the line, it's safe to say I would keep tabs on his situation. If it doesn't change, I would avoid him for this fantasy year.

Another player that I would avoid who is in the same scenario is our hometown boy Andrew Wiggins.

Wiggins, who attempted to receive religious exemption from the vaccine, was denied last week.

The only player in this situation that has a higher trust level than Irving and Wiggins is Bradley Beal.

Beal, revealed last week he isn't entirely for the vaccine and isn't in a position to get it, having just recently fought off COVID. With D.C. not mandating the vaccine in indoor places, Beal is still able to play home games without any worry.

According to NBA.com, arenas that have imposed vaccine mandates for their teams' players will not reject unvaccinated players coming in on the road. That means Beal, won't even have an issue at all with this. The only concern is if he contracts COVID-19 again, he will miss significant time.

Now I didn't get on to the topic of Ben Simmons, but truthfully there might not be a reason to. The disgruntled point guard, has been a hot topic for many fantasy basketball pundits. I would avoid Ben Simmons entirely as well, as his fantasy basketball outlook isn't all that great to begin with even if he is on the court for 40 minutes a night.

As we edge closer to the start date of the NBA season, continue to monitor the situation with Andrew Wiggins and Kyrie Irving. If things change, then they're worth a look. Especially Irving.